3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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175 643 642 66 the land, leaving a trail of misery and death, was an augury of what to expect from a tyrant. They opposed his plan to destroy all coastal towns and move the people inland where, protected by their mountains, they would be immune to foreign attack and foreign ideas. They resented their loss of property by state expropriation, and could not fail to be shocked by the grim exultation of Boisrond-Tonnère: "To draw up the act of independence, we used the skin of a white man for parchment, his skull for an inkstand, his blood for ink, and a bayonet for pen!"[3]

Even without such cogent objections to Dessalines the mulattoes would have opposed his dictatorship, for as intellectuals and as social élite they wanted a real share in the government. For this they had agitated since before 1791, and it would be a grim irony if after fourteen years of intermittent conflict the successful expulsion of whites should be followed by a continued exclusion of mulattoes from the government. It would be a worse irony to throw off the white yoke only to take on a black one. When in 1805 Dessalines made himself emperor they asked for the creation of a nobility, thinking to share the rule with him; but the Emperor's curt "*Moi seul je suis noble*" dashed this hope. Although detailed proof is lacking, it is generally accepted in Haiti that the conspiracies against the Emperor's life began with this intransigent statement.

Here, then, was the issue which in half a dozen varying forms was to split political opinion for decades: rule by a single tyrant vs. rule by the cultured class. It even made two nations of one between the years 1806 and 1820.

175 642 When Dessalines was assassinated, a Constituent Assembly was summoned to draw up a new constitution and select a new ruler. The mulattoes were in control of the Assembly which under Pétion's skilful guidance sat at the mulatto stronghold, Port-au-Prince, and there drew up a constitution assuring the limitation of the president's power by a Senate, and requiring election and reëlection of the president instead of permitting him life tenure. This achieved, the Assembly dutifully elected the black general Christophe president of Haiti. However, belonging as he did to Dessalines' school of thought —unrestricted rule by a strong man—he indignantly refused to be bound by such a constitution; when the Assembly, instead of yielding

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3. This statement is cited, with evident distaste, by Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, III, 214.

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
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to his demands for revision and for his selection as president for life, retained the constitution they had written and chose Pétion president in his stead, the rupture was instant and complete.

Dictator as against restricted president, strong man as against class or group rule, Negro against mulatto, army against civil government, executive against legislature, North against South—these are the phases of the subsequent dichotomy in Haitian politics.

A good case can easily be made for the advocates of force in Haitian government, particularly in its early days. For years the majority of men had lost the habit of steady work on the land; a strong hand was needed to reëstablish in the countryside that economic order without which liberty shrivels. The people had become accustomed to taking orders from their military leaders, and these from their commanding officer. Those, moreover, were times of crisis, when France might suddenly descend again upon her former colony: few crises can be dealt with by debating societies. Looking back on the course of Haitian history, one may point out also that the country prospered under the dictatorships of Toussaint, Dessalines, and Christophe as it never did under the limited presidencies.[4]

In 1806, therefore, the aristocratic party got its wish, although only at the price of splitting the country in two. They established a government with a president of their own and a Senate filled with their representatives. The earliest legislation naturally enough favored their own landholding group. When prosperity did not result, Pétion began to recommend to the Senate a division of the land. More and more, although the representative form was preserved, Pétion ruled as a dictator. He was mild enough not to arouse antagonism; as is always the case when freedom of speech is curbed and summary legislation required, the plea of crisis was used to justify extraordinary measures.

The legislative party was firmly in the saddle by 1820 when Boyer reunited North and South, and shared his power with the Senate.

4. The argument for dictatorship is familiar to the modern world. A defense of "totalitarianism," published in 1816 by authority of Christophe (then King Henry I), is amusingly like certain European utterances of the nineteen-thirties: "The King has the sweet satisfaction of seeing that the cultivators [who were forced to work on the land whether they wanted to or not], being everywhere regularly paid [though the sum might be tiny], are praising the freedom they enjoy." And again: "Hayti chose a kingdom in order to shun forever that chaos, that confusion and perpetual clashing, which result from those monstrous associations known under the name of *popular bodies*." Anon., *Haytian Papers* (1816), pp. 109, 113.